The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

RAYMOND F. COURTNEY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is March 4, 1992. This is an interview with Raymond F. Courtney on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Mr. Courtney, I wonder if you could give me a little about your background-where you were born, educated, grew up, etc.?

COURTNEY: I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and went to Harvard College and Harvard Business School.

Q: You were born in 1908.

COURTNEY: That is correct. I was with the Dupont Company in Wellington, Delaware for five years. Then I was in the Navy during World War II.

Q: Where did you serve in the Navy?

COURTNEY: I was both in the amphibious forces and on the books of ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence.

I obtained a reserve commission, Lt. Junior Grade in the summer of 1941 and was immediately clapped down on a desk in the Philadelphia Navy Yard, which wasn't what I had in mind when I tried to become a sailor. I managed to wangle my way out of that and down to Washington for a brief course in Naval intelligence. I went back to Philadelphia and one day came a call for someone to be assigned to the staff in London. I put in for it and was given the job. I managed to come to Washington and then was sent over to London in October 1941 and went on the staff of the Admiral in charge of the...he was called the Special Naval Observer.

After Pearl Harbor and we began to shape up for the return to Europe, I went into the amphibious force that was shaping up in Scotland to go down to land in North Africa.

Q: That was Operation Torch.

COURTNEY: Right. I was in the party that went in at Oran in Algeria. I was there for about a year and then went back to the United Kingdom to start preparing for the Normandy invasion. After VE Day there was a change of command in London, of course, and I was superfluous, so I asked if I could be a Naval Attachï¿½ rather than going out to the Pacific at that time. So I was sent to Copenhagen as Naval Attachï¿½ between 1945-46. Then I came home and was mustered out.

At that time I put in for an appointment to the Foreign Service under the Manpower Act of 1946 and was taken in. That is how I came into the Foreign Service.

Q: Just out of curiosity, in 1945-46, what would a Naval Attachï¿½ do in Copenhagen?

COURTNEY: The Legation had just been reopened after the German capitulation and we had a Minister there. There was an Air Attachï¿½ and an Army Attachï¿½ and a Naval Attachï¿½ in the customary attachï¿½ duties. There was nothing in the way of a Danish naval program, of course, but they were getting back to normal peace time operations. So there was a certain amount of naval intelligence available.

Q: Well then you came into the Department of State in 1947?

COURTNEY: Yes.

Q: This was a time of flux. What was your impression of the State Department? Was it still in the old Executive Building?

COURTNEY: That was where I applied and received an appointment, but I was given a job in the Foreign Service Planning Office, which was then housed in the building on Pennsylvania Avenue at 18th. I don't remember the name of that building. It was across the street from the old Roger Smith Hotel. I guess the Department had offices there for some time.

Q: What was your impression of the State Department at that point?

COURTNEY: Well, it was a bit bewildering. It was a new environment. I found it very interesting and, of course, fascinating. I guess I didn't have too good a broad overview to really see a great deal of the Department. In that particular office of Foreign Service Planning, there were some old Foreign Service hands and also quite a few, like myself, out of the military service. So we were somewhat novices. Of the older more experienced hands you might remember Parker Hart, who was in that office for a while, in between regular assignments.

Q: When you say Foreign Service Planning, what does this mean? What were you doing?

COURTNEY: It was an administrative office. It was not concerned with policy. It was largely concerned with budgets and assignments.

Q: The Foreign Service, of course, was just in the midst of going through a tremendous change-new responsibilities and a whole new breed of cat...men like yourself coming in with a lot of military experience, no longer just the sort of ivy league type, and a completely different world. Did you have a feeling that it was having a problem adjusting to this new environment or not?

COURTNEY: Yes, as far as I understood the problems and the opportunities. I think that would be a fair observation.

Q: What about personnel assignments? Was this done pretty much by somebody looking up into the air and saying, "Oh, maybe good old Joe could go there," or something like that, or was this more of a bureaucratic system of coming up with names?

COURTNEY: Although the title was Foreign Service Planning, looking back I think there was a good bit of ad hoc, immediate adjustment to some immediate situation.

Q: Now, your first assignment overseas was very interesting. Could you tell me where you went and what you were doing?

COURTNEY: When I received my commission as a Foreign Service Officer, I asked for an Eastern European assignment and was sent to Bulgaria. I got there in the fall of 1947. The Legation had been reopened for about a year before that. I went as a vice consul working principally on political observation and reporting and such consular business that we had to do. As you well know, that was a very turbulent time. The Communist regime was well established, of course, but it had not as yet managed to clamp the iron curtain down thoroughly so we had an opportunity to test the limits to which we could go.

We were able to move about the country somewhat freely, but we did not succeed in having any very good personal contact with the people of Bulgaria because by that time it was too dangerous, it was fatal for them.

For example, Donald Heath, the Minister, was the only one of us, that I can recall, who was able to hire a tutor to try to learn some Bulgarian. That person was allowed to do that without jeopardy. But for the rest of us, no one dared to take us on in that close a relationship. They didn't dare to speak to us on the street. So I didn't learn any real Bulgarian and I don't think any of my other colleagues did either below the level of the Minister.

But, as I said, we did move around the country. There were some restricted areas where we didn't venture, in particular the southern border with Greece and Turkey. Otherwise, from time to time, we could go up into the mountains, up to a resort, Chamkorea, about 50 miles from Sofia. I got down to the Black Sea, to Varna a couple of times. So we were able to see and observe in the country to that extent, but our personal contact was very limited.

Bit by bit the regime did succeed in clamping down on us and restricting our activities.

Q: Why was Bulgaria more Soviet than the Soviets?

COURTNEY: Well, the poor old Bulgars tried to get on the winning side and always had the back luck of being on the losing side. They had been pretty complaisant with the Nazis. I don't think they were too much actively engaged in military action, but they didn't resist the Germans. Then, I guess it was three days after the German capitulation, the Russians declared war on Bulgaria and immediately moved Dimitrov and the others with substantial military force right into Bulgaria.

Q: Bulgaria had basically been untouched by the war, hadn't it?

COURTNEY: Yes. I don't think there had been any action there...unlike Yugoslavia.

Q: When you were there, this was during the time that Tito was breaking with Stalin and Bulgaria, of course, being a Stalinist state par excellence and having a border with Yugoslavia, did you see any change in the way they were treating them because of this action?

COURTNEY: So far as one could judge, by now they were envious of the success of Tito in Yugoslavia in breaking the dominant hold. Other than that, I don't know that it affected relationships between the two countries.

Q: Our Minister when you were there was Donald Heath, with whom I served later in Saudi Arabia. Could you describe how he saw the situation and what was the attitude of the United States towards Bulgaria, as far as you could see?

COURTNEY: The official relationship was fairly cool, I think. Heath made it clear as well as he could that the United States greatly deplored the Communist regime and the way it was taking over, exploiting and suppressing the country. But beyond that, there was not a great deal that the Minister of our Legation or any of the others could do. We were well united in our efforts to contend with the Bulgarian suppression to the extent that we could, but, as I say, that was limited.

You doubtless know the story of how we broke relations.

Q: Well, will you tell it for the record. How did this come about?

COURTNEY: In the course of time it became time for one of those Communist purges of their own hierarchy. The number two man to Georgi Dimitrov was Traicho Kostov. They concocted the fantasy that Donald Heath and Kostov had conspired to supplant Dimitrov. Mr. Heath had been able to learn some Bulgarian but not enough to carry on such a conversation. Kostov had no English or French, he had only Bulgarian and Russian. So the fantasy that he and Heath had gotten together and plotted was ridiculous.

The United States government asked that the Bulgarian government retract these charges against Heath. They refused to do so. That and a number of other issues of contention brought us to the decision to sever relations.

Now, a particular incident that contributed to that was the fate of our head translator. This is a very tragic event and one of several tragedies of the time. This was Michael Shipkov. He was a fine young fellow, educated at Roberts College...

Q: Roberts College being a Protestant school in Turkey.

COURTNEY: Yes. He had been an officer in the Bulgarian Army. After the armistice, the Armistice Control Commission took over for the Allied Forces for about a year and he was detailed from the Bulgarian Army to the Staff of the British general who was a member of the Armistice Control Commission. When the ACC was withdrawn and legations were established, Shipkov came to the American Legation as our head translator.

He was in that position when I joined the Legation and was there through the rest of the time, but in the course of time he was very much fingered by the Communist regime. The secret police took him in one weekend and worked him over and told him that if he told us anything about it that was his finish. Well, he came to me and told us. A few months later they did it again. This time we put him up in the attic of the Legation and the poor guy was there the rest of the time. We did our best to get permission for him to be evacuated from the country legally, but we didn't succeed. So that was a contributing factor to the decision to sever relations.

The time came that we had to try to save him by getting him out clandestinely. We asked the CIA in Washington to give us a plan and some assistance, perhaps, in getting Shipkov out of the country. They came back with a really childish, impossible scheme. Have him set out on the road by night and make his way, not by road but cross country over the mountains with five or six feet of snow, and make his way down to the Greek border and try to make a clandestine meeting in a graveyard there.

By this time I had made some acquaintances down in Istanbul and enlisted the help of an American businessman who was retired there and who was very knowledgeable having lived in the Balkans for a long time. Also, with some help from a member of the British Legation, who was actually a secret service man. From his sources he was able to provide us with some false papers for Shipkov and Archie Walker down in Istanbul was able to send a couple of couriers across.

So came almost the last night, I put Shipkov out on the road about 3 o'clock in the morning and sent the poor guy on his way. Well, he made the first safe house all right and the second safe house, but then the couriers didn't turn up and he didn't want to compromise his hosts any further so he tried to set out on his own without any guidance or assistance. The militia picked him up. We learned later that the reason the couriers had not shown was that they had both gone down with flu and had laid over 24 hours in a haystack. Shipkov's capture was announced over the State radio with a great blare of publicity. Shipkov was given a very, very bad time. After 15 years of that he was released from prison and allowed to live in exile in Troyan. He died in 1990.

Q: When you all departed from Bulgaria, where did you go?

COURTNEY: This was early in 1950. I went to London. We got to Paris on the train and went our various separate ways. I received orders to go right to London. There I was assigned to replace the outgoing personal assistant to Ambassador Lewis Douglas. I did that for his final six months. He was just on the point of leaving. When he left and was replaced by Walter Gifford, I asked if I couldn't go back to Eastern European business. I was reassigned within the Embassy and worked on Eastern European affairs for the rest of my almost four years in London.

Q: What was your impression of Lewis Douglas as an ambassador and how he operated?

COURTNEY: Mr. Douglas was, of course, a shrewd, capable businessman. A very positive personality. A good diplomat. At times he was very emotional. At that time he was winding down his service as ambassador. He and his family had become very close to the royal family and that figured rather prominently in their lives. He was also very much concerned with his son's oil business in Texas. He was giving a fair amount of attention to that. From time to time he could be impetuous and arbitrary, but I think he had been a very good and effective ambassador.

Q: From your perspective, how were relations between the United States and Britain at that time, at the operating level?

COURTNEY: Very good, I think. The job on my desk was largely an exchange of information primarily with the Foreign Office, of course, concerning developments in Russia and Eastern Europe. I tried to get some moral support and maybe some effective benefit from trying to help the informal governments in exile that were in London then. They were very informal, but the Foreign Office was trying to give them some encouragement, and insofar as one in my position or my superior's position could do, we were trying to do the same.

So, to go back to a more direct answer to your question, as far as my experience went, our relationship was very free and open and cooperative. As for what I could observe of more senior people...Julius Holmes was Minister for a time and then was replaced by Walt Butterworth when Gifford came on board. I think they all enjoyed a very friendly, cooperative relationship with the British.

Q: You were sitting there exchanging information about what we were finding out about what was really a closed society behind the Iron Curtain, did you get any indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the British reporting versus the American reporting?

COURTNEY: I would hesitate to say.

Q: Would you say that both the British and the Americans were pretty much on the same track as to how they were observing these developments? This was the period when the Cold War was really going into the deep freeze. Today historians are wondering...Well, I wonder how much of this was sort of domestic politics in the United States, etc., etc. Did you have any feeling that the British were seeing it from a different perspective than we were?

COURTNEY: I think I would have to say that it seemed to me that we were pretty much on the same wavelength. I can't recall any incident or instance that I was aware of that indicated a difference in point of view.

Q: From what I gather, I don't think there was. It was a pretty abysmal situation there and it would be hard to be overly impressed.

COURTNEY: We were both, I think, appraising the Soviet buildup much in the same way. I think, so far as I knew, we were agreed on the objectives more or less and what we should do to withstand it.

Q: We are talking now in 1992 and it is hard for everybody to get used to talking about former Soviet Union because of the change really in the last few months. How did we view the "Soviet threat" in this 1950-54 period from your vantage point in London?

COURTNEY: I can recall their expressions of respect for George Kennan's analysis of the problem and our means of facing it.

Q: This was the long telegram and the containment policy and the Mr. X article.

COURTNEY: So far as to our appraisal of the Soviet military ambitions and threat, I think we probably saw it much in the same terms. I think we were, to the best of my knowledge, in harmony in the need for NATO and the role that the United States should take in NATO. I think the Brits were still emotionally happy to be working with the Yanks still, in the peace time which had followed the war fever. I am sure that they viewed the Soviet threat as deadly serious and very inimical to British interests even though by now British interests were on a different scale then they had been pre-war with their empire still intact.

Q: As you were exchanging this information, was there anybody on the American side saying..."You have to be a little careful about dealing with the British because they still have some of these Communist types who came out of Cambridge, Oxford, etc." Later on we had the McLeans, the Kim Philbys and etc. Was there any inkling that you were getting from the American side saying to be a little careful about this, or not?

COURTNEY: No, I was unaware of any hesitancy or caution.

Q: You left London in 1954 and then you went to Nicosia where you served from 1954-57. What was the situation on Cyprus when you went there?

COURTNEY: The British were just in the process of moving their Middle East military command from Egypt to Cyprus. The Governor General, who had been there some time, Armitage, was winding down. In conjunction with this military move the new Governor General, John Harding, former CIGS...

Q: That is Chairman of the Imperial General Staff.

COURTNEY: Yes. I guess Armitage left shortly after I arrived. There was a good reason to believe that political foment was brewing, but it had not quite surfaced at the time I arrived.

Q: That was the EOKA and all that.

COURTNEY: Yes. I got there in September and so far as I was aware, everything was quite quiet. In January, 1955, they apprehended a schooner running guns in. Then on Easter came the first violent action and that was the blowup of a number of electrical power lines and installations, accompanied by public declarations by the EOKA people that the revolt was on. It was soon after that that it was definitely learned that Colonel George Grivas was on the island and beginning to direct guerrilla and terrorist operations. From that point on, of course, the violence developed and the British tried to counter it with troops. By the time I left in 1957 they had substantial forces there trying to restore order.

Q: What did we have on the island? What were we up to?

COURTNEY: We, the United States Foreign Service, were not very well prepared for what was there, and I was certainly completely unprepared. My post had been vacant for about three months because the man who was there had to leave and I was delayed, to the annoyance of the Department. I was delayed in trying to wind up a job I was doing in London, a tripartite British, French, American exchange agreement. Anyway, I knew nothing about the situation and on arrival found myself in a pleasant surrounding with a very comfortable house and a good office and staff.

Q: You were what?

COURTNEY: I was the Consul, it was a small post. I was beginning to learn what I could from scratch. There was also an NSA monitoring station on the island.

Q: NSA being National Security Agency.

COURTNEY: It was also handling a certain amount of official traffic through the area and that was its ostensible reason for being there. It was ostensibly under the Consulate, although the cover was pretty thin.

Our official interest there had been limited to having a representative in that area to observe and look after a very few consular needs. There was not much business association, except for the Cyprus Mines Corporation which was a very profitable copper mining enterprise there. This was owned by the Mudd family in California who had succeeded in discovering the old Roman copper mines and developing them very successfully and shipping out substantial amounts of copper. There were some asbestos enterprises, but I don't think there was any American interests in those. They were European, I think. There was not much else in the way of commercial interests on the part of the United States.

As the situation developed, of course, it became more useful that we had a better equipped observation post there to try to know what was developing. In the course of my three years there we added substantially to our staff and communication facilities.

Q: Let's talk a bit about relations with Makarios, who at that point was the Greek Cypriot leader and with the Turkish minority. And were there any contacts with representatives of EOKA when you were there? Were people coming to you as a counter force to the Brits?

COURTNEY: No. I did not have any contact with any representative of EOKA. I enjoyed and found my contact with Makarios very interesting. For the most part I was just there to exchange chitchat really. Without any instructions I tried not to mislead him into thinking I was making any official representation of the United States government. But, of course, I think it was right, and I think the Department agreed, that it was good that I could have an open relationship with him and talk about the problems. I took it upon myself to ask him why he didn't free himself from the dictation of Grivas and declare for full independence rather than enosis, union with Greece. The old Greek Cypriots had gotten along fairly happily together under first the Turkish rule and then the British colonial rule. It wasn't really necessary that they divide so violently. If he could sponsor a movement for independence with the British colonial regime ending, which was obvious and the British knew it and would accept a new status.

Maybe this was rather naive and presumptuous on my part to talk like this, but he seemed to be interested in listening. Also he was not a free man by that time, he was not able to disassociate himself from the military and political support that was coming from Athens. He had to stand for enosis without due consideration for the Turkish interests there.

Q: Did you have much contact at that point with the Turkish minority?

COURTNEY: A little bit, yes. Denktash was very active then and I got to know him a bit, although not so much as the Greeks.

Q: What about the British? It was not a happy time as their empire was dissolving around them. I know in other parts of the world you met up with the local British officials being rather unhappy because they felt the United States was standing around to pick up the pieces in one way or another. Did you feel this when you were on Cyprus from the local British civil authorities?

COURTNEY: No, I honestly don't think so. I certainly wasn't aware of it and don't think it was there. Prime Minister Anthony Eden mentioned us favorably in talking to Parliament one day, which, of course, was reflecting an official view, but I think it was genuine. I did not sense any of that kind of resentment on the part of the Britishers who I knew.

Q: You were there at a very difficult time for American and British relations...the Suez crisis in October 1956 in which Cyprus was the main staging point. Could you explain what you were doing then and what the situation was from your vantage point as this thing built up?

COURTNEY: All I could do was observe the buildup and report that. I know by then that CIA was reporting the buildup quite independently of anything I was reporting. But your question was?

Q: Well, one of the things that happened, particularly in London, was that all of a sudden the wires went dead. Here you are in a local place but in many ways a critical spot because this was where the British launched their attack on the canal. Did you find all of a sudden nobody was answering your calls or you couldn't get on the base, or anything like that?

COURTNEY: No. Not at all. I am sure that my contact with the Governor General was just as free as it had been. And also with the military officers.

Q: What about afterwards? At a certain point Eisenhower said that he was not with the British. This was a major...

COURTNEY: Dulles gave the British Ambassador a dreadful dressing down.

Q: Yes. And you know military men are not overly subtle on these things. Were you getting anything to the effect that we felt the British were letting the side down?

COURTNEY: No, I don't think we did.

Q: That is very interesting. What was your impression of our Embassy in Athens at that time? Were they overly promoting the Greek Cypriot enosis cause?

COURTNEY: That is hard for me to say. Possibly some more degree of sympathy to the enosis cause might have come through in some of the communications that I was acquainted with. But other than that I would hesitate to try to make any judgment.

Q: Sometimes it comes through that an Embassy takes the local cause, but it wasn't hitting you very hard on that?

COURTNEY: No. During my time I didn't observe anything like that.

Q: When you left in 1957, where did you see the situation on the island was going at that time?

COURTNEY: Well, it was beginning to be quite clear, I thought, that first, there was a bad split between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots and that was going to be a difficult situation. And secondly, that the Cypriots were going to get their way. In other words, they were going to get independence at least. Enosis looked like a possibility, but maybe not so great a possibility as the likelihood, by then, of independence, but the British colonial rule was coming to an end.

Q: What about the State Department while you were out there. You said that you really didn't get many instructions. Did you feel we had much of a policy there or was it just a waiting period?

COURTNEY: The latter I think.

Q: That is what I gathered. Later when we got into it we couldn't get out of it. Then you left Nicosia and went back to the State Department. I have you serving as an advisor regarding nuclear weapons at the State Department from 1957-61. What was that?

COURTNEY: There was an office called the Special Assistant on Atomic Energy at that time. It had three divisions...peaceful uses, military uses and international arrangements. Gerard Smith was just finishing as Special Assistant for Atomic Affairs and going over as Assistant Secretary. Philip Farley took over from him and I was assigned as the military man. My job was to...well, of course, this was a time of the onrushing buildup of the nuclear arsenal and the development of all kinds of weapons, including the hydrogen bomb. So my job was to keep an eye on these developments and determine how they affected our diplomatic relations and what the consequences to our diplomacy would be with the development of these weapons.

For example, one particular job was to work at some length with the Defense Department to establish rules for the use of some of the weapons in case of the incapacity of the President. That was something of an extended operation and was finally concluded.

I maintained continuously liaison with CIA on the matter of the development of Soviet capabilities.

Q: This was during a period when the Soviets were moving into the hydrogen bomb and were getting bigger an bigger arms. You had been a naval officer and dealt with the military most of your career in one way or another, what was your impression about our developing stockpiles...During this period I was in Germany as a vice consul seeing these atomic guns being wheeled around through the autobahns and all that. But obviously they had a range of about 20 miles and were going to be...Was there unease in part in developing all these atomic artillery things and shells, which now, of course, we are having difficulty disposing of?

COURTNEY: Yes, there certainly was unease on my part and I think I was not alone. I was really astounded with the attitude of some of the military people about these wonderful, tactical nukes that could be used here and there almost indiscriminately. This was at a junior level, I know.

Q: But I think it is important to catch this.

COURTNEY: There was more enthusiasm then hard headed thoughtful discretion as to what we needed, why and how they might be used.

Q: Apparently, this continued, because we are talking now about getting rid of what we have and the plethora of tactical weapons to be used practically at the hand grenade level is just astounding and kind of ridiculous. Did you find yourself, as a State Department type, saying to your military colleagues, "You know maybe this isn't a very good idea to be thinking about throwing these things around in a country where it would be a radiation problem as well as a destructive problem?"

COURTNEY: Yes, to a limited extent I did. I can remember Curtis Lemay turning on me once and saying, "You haven't been around very long, have you?"

Q: Curtis Lemay was the Chief-of-Staff of the Air Force.

COURTNEY: Yes. I recall with pleasure how Secretary Dulles withstood the pressure from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Bradford and others to nuke the Chinese if they didn't layoff Quemoy and Matsu.

Q: How did you see it from your perspective? This is a very important period.

COURTNEY: I can't profess that I had a deep understanding of what was needed and what we could do, but I did question, to myself at least and whenever I had occasion to talk to anybody, whether we did need all the marvelous weapons that we were perfecting. It seemed to me that we were letting the momentum carry us along without necessarily thinking why, or all the possible consequences. I went into this job as we noted in 1957 and I had been in the job just a little while when Sputnik appeared on the horizon.

Q: Sputnik being the first space launch vehicle which was launched by the Soviets causing quite a shock to the United States.

COURTNEY: Yes, it really was quite a shock and gave quite an impetus to us to come back strong in anyway that we could.

Q: What was the feeling at this time...you were with people who were talking about nuclear options and all...had we reached the point of mutually shared destruction or was there the feeling that we could come out of it and the Soviets wouldn't?

COURTNEY: I think there was recognition on the part of even our most enthusiastic people that victory in a nuclear war was unlikely for anybody. That the price of a nuclear fight was one that would be very, very dreadful, but that we couldn't figure out a better alternative than this capability to deter an attack from the other side. The deterrent could only be accomplished by this massive arsenal. I think there was troubled concerned all right on the part of a lot of people, but no one able to devise a better answer.

Q: Were you able to pick up at all from various sources how the Soviets were approaching nuclear things? Was there the feeling that the Soviets were going at it with the same enthusiasm ours was?

COURTNEY: Yes. I think that was our general belief. As I said, we kept a pretty close exchange with CIA and I think the appraisal was that the Soviets were going at it in the same way with great resources and great capabilities.

Q: You got off the job just about the time the Kennedy administration came in, didn't you?

COURTNEY: Yes.

Q: Was there a change in attitude at all with the Kennedy group?

COURTNEY: No, not that I was aware.

Q: Then you went back to London where you were from 1961-63. What were you doing there?

COURTNEY: Well, I was carrying on as a consequence of my work in the Department. I was, in fact, a political/military officer on the staff. That phrase was just be established. It was a matter of exchanging defense information and working in cooperation with the Foreign Office on these defense problems.

Q: You were there during Skybolt?

COURTNEY: Yes, that is the particular incident I remember most colorfully.

Q: Could you give some background for somebody who is reading this about what Skybolt was?

COURTNEY: Well, Skybolt was an air launched cruise missile that we were developing. The British very much wanted to obtain it for their air force, also. There was a particular meeting where McNamara came over met with Thornycroft, the British Minister of Defense. Thornycroft made an impassioned, eloquent plea for Skybolt. He said that the effectiveness of the British Air Force in the future depended on them having this weapon too. Well, we didn't give it too them. I don't know the full reasons. One was I think that we were not entirely satisfied as to its merit and I don't think it figured eventually very largely in the Air Force arsenal.

Q: But it had quite an impact on the British political scene, didn't it?

COURTNEY: Not that much, I think. Not so much as Thornycroft declared. He said that the survival of that government depended on their success. Well, that was an over statement in my recollection.

Q: How were political/military relations with the British during this time?

COURTNEY: I would say, again, very satisfactory. To go back just a bit, when I was in the Department I sat in on a meeting when our Atomic Energy Commission reached the decision to share our knowledge of the hydrogen bomb with the British delegation. And so far as I am aware, that kind of relationship continued during my time in London.

Q: David Bruce was your Ambassador most of the time. What was your impression of him and how he operated?

COURTNEY: He was great. He was a splendid ambassador. A fine man and a very good ambassador.

Q: Did he take much interest in this political/military relationship with the British?

COURTNEY: Yes, he did as a matter of fact. He kept in very close touch with them.

Q: So you found yourself briefing him fairly often on such matters?

COURTNEY: Yes, I did.

Q: Were there any great problems with the Kennedy/Macmillan relationship?

COURTNEY: Not that I am aware of.

Q: Then you came back to Washington in 1963 where you served until 1965 as public relations advisor for European Affairs. What did this mean?

COURTNEY: Well it was largely a matter of dealing with the press. First preparing the Department press officer for his daily formal meeting with the press and then just taking their enquiries and representations. Largely it was a matter of information dissemination.

Q: This was when we were getting more and more involved in Vietnam. Was Vietnam playing a major role in European concerns?

COURTNEY: Yes, I think it is fair to say that increasingly we were getting skeptical questions on what we were doing and why. We were holding the line, I say we collectively and include myself in that...I have to confess I believed our doctrine and carried that with me to Vancouver.

Q: I did too.

COURTNEY: I believe that was representative of those of us who were dealing with such matters.

Q: So Vietnam must have played a fairly big role in your final assignment, 1965-68, in Vancouver. Canadian-American relations were pretty cool at this time weren't they, particularly over Vietnam?

COURTNEY: Yes. Not so much in British Columbia as I think, perhaps, in Ottawa. I talked with people in Vancouver and Victoria and on occasion talked to a public gathering and wrote a couple of pieces that were picked up by a couple of newspapers and given some dissemination in Canada. And, as I said, I was convinced that our policy in Vietnam was necessary and right. I remember one article that the Vancouver Sun published giving it the headline, which I wouldn't have...World War III Starts Here. It was something of an overstatement of what I had tried to say.

I think the feeling in British Columbia was perhaps more sympathetic, more convinced.

Q: It is a more conservative area isn't it?

COURTNEY: Yes, it was then. I believe it is not quite so conservative now as it was then. And, of course, they look to the Pacific and the Far East as much as they do back across the mountains to the east. They are very much concerned with stability in East Asia.

Q: What were your main concerns when you were in Vancouver?

COURTNEY: Well, I really didn't have any difficult problems. I was there to try to keep Ottawa and Washington somewhat informed as to developments. There certainly were no difficult problems in any sense between Washington and Victoria during my time there. It was a very pleasant, friendly relationship.

Q: Were there any reflections felt about the increasing Free Quebec development?

COURTNEY: Yes, although it was not so prominent during that time as it has become, but there is a distinct feeling there that if Quebec should separate, British Columbia possibly in association with Alberta and Saskatchewan might elect to establish their own independent identity. I would be very much surprised if that ever happened. But there is certainly that sentiment there. They would have just as much reason to separate themselves from Ottawa as Quebec would.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that you were in an area that was not emotionally connected too close to the central government?

COURTNEY: Yes.

Q: There are so many ties in the United States that run not from Ottawa to Washington but basically north to south. Did you find in many ways you were dealing more with the State of Washington than one might think?

COURTNEY: Yes, in a sense. There is that very distinct interest in the southern part of the continent in terms of business. Of course, some industrial products are the same and in direct competition with those in Washington or Oregon. British Columbians are very well aware that California, for example, would dearly love to have some of their good water. There is a natural connection of some of the natural gas resources in the northern part of the continent. And, even, to put it in somewhat vague terms, there is a cultural affinity, perhaps just by being on the western side of the continental divide.

Q: How about consular problems? Did you have any problems with Americans coming up and having a good time in Canada and getting into trouble?

COURTNEY: Nothing serious occurred during my time. Of course there is a great flow of Americans. During my time we reckoned there was at least about a million American visitors to British Columbia in the course of a summer. And from time to time someone would turn up with a hardship story and we had to try to get them some help one way or another. But I don't recall having any problem when an American got himself into legal difficulties.

Q: The drug culture wasn't a problem particularly there then?

COURTNEY: Not really. Only just beginning. What I just said probably wouldn't be true today.

Q: Yes, I am sure both sides are having...I remember talking to a Canadian consul in Seattle talking about problems with Canadian Indians coming down to Washington and getting into trouble and having to get them back. You didn't have the reverse side of that?

COURTNEY: No.

Q: At that point you turned 60 and retired. Is that right?

COURTNEY: Yes.

Q: Well this has been fascinating and I thank you.

COURTNEY: Well, I enjoyed it.

End of interview